

## A New Beginning: The U.S. and Muslim Communities Around the World



On June 4, 2009, President Obama delivered his promised address to Muslim communities all over the world, announcing a “new beginning” between the United States and Muslims around the globe based on “mutual interest and mutual respect.” The speech also addressed the U.S. commitment to democracy, women’s rights, education, economic development, health, and the advancement of science and technology through cooperation and partnerships. The President’s speech touched on themes reflective of the work that MEPI has been doing since its inception.

### Democracy

Freedom of speech, rule of law, and government transparency are “not just American ideas; they are human rights.” President Obama stressed his commitment “to governments that reflect the will of the people.” The President also called on governments to “maintain power through consent, not coercion, respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise.”

### Women’s Rights

President Obama said that “a woman who is denied education is denied equality ... I do not believe that women must make the same choices as men in order to be equal, and I respect those women who choose to live their lives in traditional roles. But it should be their choice. That is why the United States will partner with any Muslim-majority country to support expanded literacy for girls, and to help young women pursue employment through micro-financing that helps people live their dreams.”

### Education

The United States is committed to helping children throughout the world gain access to a quality education and to opportunities for higher education. President Obama renewed the commitment by offering to expand exchange programs, increase scholarships, encourage more Americans to study in Muslim communities, invest in online learning for teachers and children around the world, and “create a new online network so a young person in Kansas can communicate instantly with a young person in Cairo.”

### Economic Development

The United States is committed to working with Muslim communities to foster economic growth, investment, and build a sustainable economic future. In Cairo, the President announced the creation of a new corps of business volunteers to partner with counterparts in Muslim-majority countries. He also committed to hosting a Summit on Entrepreneurship 2009 to “identify how we can strengthen ties among business leaders, foundations and social entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world.”

### Science and Technology

The President announced several new initiatives to support scientific cooperation and advancement. The U.S. will launch a new fund to support technological development in Muslim-majority countries, and to help transfer ideas to the marketplace so they can create more jobs, open centers of scientific excellence in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and appoint new science envoys to collaborate on programs that develop new sources of energy, create green jobs, digitize records, clean water, and grow new crops.

### Global Health

According to the President, public health challenges of the 21st century are best addressed in an integrated way and in partnership with others. President Obama’s new comprehensive approach to global health will begin to focus attention on broad improvements in crucial areas such as child and maternal health, family planning, and neglected tropical diseases, with continued support for robust HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria programs throughout the world. The President also announced “a new global effort with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to eradicate polio.”

## FEATURES

### Secretary Clinton Meets Egyptian Democracy Activists



On May 28th, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with a group of 16 young Egyptian democracy activists currently participating in the New Generation of Advocates Program in Washington. The New Generation Program is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and MEPI.

During public remarks that preceded the meeting, Secretary Clinton praised the activists, saying that she is "so honored to receive this group here at the State Department. This is a group of young men and women

from Egypt who are committed to improving the lives of the Egyptian people, providing more economic opportunity, greater growth in democracy, respect for human rights. They come from a variety of backgrounds. Each of them brings a special experience, an expertise to their interests and their efforts." The Secretary also stressed that supporting democracy and human rights is always "a core pillar of American foreign policy."

The remarks were followed by a private meeting between the Secretary and the democracy activists.

During their fellowship, participants received training in advocacy and got an inside look at the way U.S. democracy works. After their training, the Fellows were matched with civil society organizations throughout the U.S. where they shared experiences with American counterparts. The activists concluded their program by visiting U.S. government officials, members of Congress, media outlets, and think tanks.

The New Generation Program is implemented by Freedom House, an independent non-governmental organization that supports the expansion of freedom in the world.

### Secretary Clinton Meets Leaders for Democracy Fellows



On June 8, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with twenty Middle Eastern and North African democracy activists who are participants in MEPI's Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program (LDF). LDF is implemented by Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and funded by MEPI.

Secretary Clinton thanked the Fellows for their "commitment to work on behalf of good governance, rule of law, democracy, human rights, [and] women's rights" and stressed that, "as President Obama said in Cairo, we have a number of very important issues that we wish to work on with people across the world and particularly with Muslims across the world. And among those are democracy

and human rights that are really at the core of self-expression and personal freedom and potential." She emphasized that the United States will "be a partner in working with those who are working on the front lines in their own countries."

LDF is a three-month program that has provided over 60 emerging leaders from across the Middle East and North Africa with an opportunity to create democratic reforms within their home countries. Utilizing the Maxwell School's faculty and institute, professional staff, and diverse student population, the LDF program enables these Fellows to strengthen their leadership skills and position themselves as successful innovators in their countries.

The LDF program is divided into two major parts. First, fellows spend five weeks on Syracuse University's campus participating in workshops, lectures, and discussions. This time is specifically designed to provide the Fellows with a comprehensive understanding of democratic values, conflict management, and the role of civil society within democratic systems of government. The second part of the program pairs fellows with professional organizations in Washington related to their fields of interest.



## FEATURES

### Middle East Entrepreneur Training (MEET) Program Brings MENA Business Leaders to the U.S.



Twenty prominent business leaders and entrepreneurs from the Middle East and North Africa gathered in San Diego April 20 through May 8 to take part in the latest Middle East Entrepreneur Training (MEET) program, an intensive training and networking program funded by MEPI and presented by the Entrepreneur Development Program at the Rady School of Management, University of California, San Diego.

Now in its sixth year, MEET is an innovative training program designed to identify, develop, and sustain a new core of business and civil society leaders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The MEET program has trained nearly 500 of the most promising and talented leaders, through seminars and workshops conducted in the US and the region.

Participants in the latest program hailed from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Oman, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Graduates become part of the MEET Alumni Network of over 375 business and civil society organization leaders who continue to collaborate through the project's website ([www.meet-alumni.org](http://www.meet-alumni.org)) and at alumni events. The next MEET alumni event is planned for August 2009 in Istanbul.

Since completing their training, graduates of the MEET program have created over 1,000 jobs and launched hundreds of new ventures (for-profit companies and not-for-profit organizations) in the MENA region.

### Student Leaders Program Launches



Over 100 undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 22 from 17 countries in the Middle East and North Africa arrived in Washington DC on June 29th to take part in the MEPI 2009 Student Leaders Program.

Attracting some of the most highly motivated and academically outstanding students from universities throughout the region, the program focuses on civil society, democratic participation and leadership. Students are hosted at one of the following U.S. universities: Georgetown University in Washington, DC; the University of Delaware; Montana State University; Roger Williams University in Rhode Island; Benedictine University in Illinois, and Wayne State University in Michigan.

The MEPI Student Leaders program is an intensive five-week program for students from the Middle East and North Africa to develop leadership skills and expand their understanding of American civil society as well as the democratic process, and learn how both may be applied in their home communities. Participants have the opportunity to meet their American peers, and engage in local community and service activities. The program includes both an academic program segment conducted by scholars and other professionals with expertise in leadership and U.S. studies, as well as a study tour to other regions of the country. Each component plays a critical role in advancing the participants from students to civic activists.

## FEATURES

### Online Writers and Media in the Gulf Workshop



UAE Journalists Association and the [International Research & Exchanges Board](#) (IREX) hosted a workshop in May, 2009, titled “Online Writers and Media in the Gulf,” bringing together leading journalists and online writers from the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. This workshop was hosted by IREX and funded by MEPI as part of the MENA Media project. The workshop focused on how technology is reshaping the way people receive news and information, as well as the impact of these changes on the media industry in the Gulf. The goal is to begin a dialogue about what opportunities and challenges these changes are bringing, and encourage journalists to share resources, skills, and knowledge.

The program opened with a session on how new forms of media (online forums/blogging) are changing public debate, looking at case studies from the Gulf including the successful electoral reform blogging campaign in Kuwait in 2006, as well as examples from outside the Arab world in Eastern Europe and Malaysia. The second session addressed the relationship between online writers and media: are they competitors or can they collaborate? Participants and panelists discussed the impact of multimedia, new business models for online publications, and future trends for online media. The program concluded by addressing the issue of online ethics: the expectations and responsibilities for online writers.

IREX is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development.

#### Featured Participant: Sabria Jawhar



During the Media in the Gulf workshop, participating Saudi blogger Sabria Jawhar was invited to be a regular [guest blogger for the Huffington Post](#) by the Senior News Editor who was attending the workshop. Sabria Jawhar is an IPhD Student at Newcastle Upon Tyne University, UK, and writes for Arabisto.com and the Saudi Gazette. She previously served as the Gazette's Jeddah bureau chief and is one of the leading women journalists in the Kingdom. Her commentaries on terrorism, women's rights and reform in Saudi Arabia also are carried by leading websites, blogs and print publications worldwide.

### iEARN Conducts Oman High School Journalism Workshop



Ten teachers from select high schools in Oman attended a two-week journalism training workshop held at Northwestern University in Qatar in June, 2009. The workshop aims to help teachers start school journalism programs and publications. The workshop was part of a MEPI-funded high-school journalism project implemented by the [International Education and Resource Network](#) (iEARN) and partners including the Academy for Educational Development (AED), Northwestern University in Qatar, the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), the Daniel Pearl Foundation, and leading Gulf newspapers.

The June training was designed to allow teachers to help youth develop their skills in the field of journalism and to foster their creativity in writing, reporting, photography and illustration. During the workshop, teachers visited *The Peninsula*—Qatar's Leading English Daily Newspaper to receive hands-on education on how daily newspapers are

produced. “It was an amazing and useful experience,” said Issa Al Shabibi, a teacher at Shabib bin Attiyah School. “I got brilliant ideas on how journalism functions.” Future training will extend beyond Qatar's borders to include online seminars.



## FEATURES

### Youth of Today, Leaders of Tomorrow Workshop



A diverse group of 25 North African women convened in Rabat, Morocco, June 15 – 19, to participate in the “Youth of Today, Leaders of Tomorrow” conference, hosted by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and funded by MEPI. The women, 22 to 34 years old, came from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. The diverse group includes writers and artists working to create after-school programs for children, business women raising money and awareness to fight the rise of HIV/AIDS, and students running micro-credit programs on campuses for rural women.

The workshop was the kick-off activity for a year-long program for this selective group of women representing countries, communities and causes. The program will continue to nurture the group’s leadership skills over the next year through a series of interactive training sessions, online discussions (through [www.Aswat.com](http://www.Aswat.com)), peer mentoring, and sharing of global experiences and perspectives.

The women came to Morocco with visions for improving their communities and a shared commitment to building a network of young women leaders in North Africa focused on the region’s most pressing social and political problems. For many of the participants, this was the first time they had met women from neighboring countries. The workshop provided a foundation for dialogue, the chance to share common experiences, problems and solutions. Participants had the opportunity to work with experts, such as Cathy Allen, president of the political consulting firm Connections Group, and Taleb Salhab, national outreach director of the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS). Allen and Salhab led participants through the fundamentals of community organizing: strategic planning, advocacy, networking, image and self-confidence building, on-camera presentation, time management, fundraising, and the use of technology. Participants also had a chance to meet Moroccan Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi and celebrate the historical June 12 Moroccan municipal elections, which saw 3,406 new women councilors voted into office. Minister of Social Development Nouzha Skalli hailed the “Youth of Today, Leaders of Tomorrow” participants as the region’s “next generation of women leaders” with opportunities for empowerment and the success it can bring.

Following the conference, the women returned home with written strategies they developed together to help them carry out their community programs. Over the next several months, they will work on their projects with ongoing guidance and technical assistance from NDI and international experts who will act as mentors.

### U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Speaks at Businesswomen Conference Launch



Ambassador Margaret Scobey, U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, delivered the opening remarks entitled “Surviving and Thriving Under Turbulent Economic Times” at the second U.S. Corporate Ambassadors Conference, Held in Cairo, Egypt on June 10, the conference addressed a variety of critical topics for business leaders and focused on securing financing sources and finding new trade venues.

Ambassador Scobey stressed that business leaders today should “look for ways to “thrive” and not just to “survive” the current crisis” and to “focus not just on creating networks but also on finding ways to finance innovation and entrepreneurship.” She also quoted President Obama who recently said that “innovation is the currency of the 21st century.” (The full version of Ambassador Scobey’s remarks and information on the Corporate Ambassadors Program can be found on the [U.S. Embassy in Egypt website](http://www.U.S.EmbassyinEgypt.gov).)

The Corporate Ambassadors Program connects U.S. women CEOs and senior executives with businesswomen in the Middle East and North Africa, affording them the chance to discuss critical business topics of interest in the region. The Corporate Ambassadors Program provides a unique opportunity for members of the MENA Businesswomen’s Network (MENA BWN) and U.S. businesswomen to meet, exchange idea, and to help build strong linkages. The program is part of the MENA BWN project which is implemented by Vital Voices Global Partnership and local partners including the Association for Women’s Total Advancement and Development, and it is funded by MEPI.

## FEATURES

### Women in Technology: Success in Morocco



In Rabat, Morocco, three Women in Technology (WIT) training centers (Entraide National, Tanmia's Sale, and Temara centers) banded together to form a Professional Development Network (PDN) to expand their personal and professional skills. Members have already held workshops and training aimed to enhance women's skills in the job market. WIT is a MEPI-funded project that empowers women and expands their participation in the workforce and civil society by providing cutting-edge training in business planning, professional development and information technology.

Among the exciting new endeavors, participants are implementing a Language Enhancement Training in English and French. Participants benefiting from this training pay a nominal monthly fee and have even agreed to sponsor participants who cannot afford the training. In addition, a past participant, who worked for the Ministry of Communication, is organizing a free training for PDN participants to cultivate women's public speaking and leadership skills.

The women's Network is also brainstorming ideas for small businesses. In a recent meeting, members discussed utilizing a well-known technique developed by Moroccan women to save money called "Daret"—a local system (similar to micro-credit) where women collectively save and lend money interest free among members of their established group. Members of the PDN are organizing speaker events to discuss issues such as the worldwide financial crisis and the new Moroccan Family Law impacting women's rights.

Aicha Moussaif, a PDN participant shared her inspirational story with women in the group. She spoke about her success in obtaining a job to financially support her children:

*My name is Aicha Moussaif and I am 44 years old. Life was not easy on me because I dropped out of high school, got married, and had to help my husband financially support our four children. In order to make an income, I learned knitting and embroidery and sold my products to other women. As my kids grew older, I realized that I could manage to make time for myself; I decided to fulfill my thirst for education through a long distance learning program. Shortly after, I heard about the Women in Technology Program and I decided to enroll in the WIT training sessions.*

*WIT helped me sharpen many skills in IT. I especially enjoyed learning how to process and edit a document on Microsoft Word, make calculations with Microsoft Excel, and create a data base through Access. I also enjoyed preparing PowerPoint presentations, which before was like magic to me, and I always wondered how people manage to add animations and customize PowerPoint. The WIT program also helped me create my blog and I'm planning to put my handmade products on my new site. The blog I created will help me post and introduce my embroidery and decoration products online. My goal is to attract customers and generate an income from my home.*

*Now, I know what it means when my kids tell me that they are going to do research or type a document in a cyber café. I no longer need to ask the manager of the local cyber café for help because I am self sufficient on the computer. I used to panic whenever I turned on a computer, yet now I feel emancipated and I am proud of myself. I am looking forward to having my own computer at home so I can practice all I learned with the Women in Technology Program and pass it on to my kids.*

*Finally, I would like to share a funny story that recently occurred. When I went to the local cyber café to do my homework, I posted a video on my blog. Shortly after, my daughter came to see me and the moment she entered into the cyber café, I was watching a video on YouTube of Barack Obama waving his hands to the public listening to his speech during the inauguration ceremony and my daughter ran back to my husband and my other kids telling them: "I saw my Mom chatting with Barack Obama and he was waving to her."*

#### Mini Documentary: Aicha and other WIT Program Participants in Morocco Share their Stories

Watch an inspiring mini-documentary featuring inspirational stories from WIT program participants in Morocco and a brief introduction to the WIT's multi-phase efforts in helping women achieve financial security through employment-driven technology training and education.



## EVENTS & NEWS

### Upcoming Events

#### Lebanon

WILpower Legal Workshop for Women Lawyers  
Beirut - Contact [DaniaDib@hotmail.com](mailto:DaniaDib@hotmail.com) for details  
RSVP at <http://www.womeninlaw.net/web/wilpower/lb>

#### Kuwait

WILpower Legal Workshop for Women Lawyers  
Kuwait City - July 6-7, 2009  
RSVP at <http://www.womeninlaw.net/kw>

#### Jordan

Alumni Network: Preparing leaders for Tomorrow  
Amman - July 15, 2009  
RSVP by contacting MEPI Alumni Coordinator Lina Arafat:  
[larafat@amideast.org](mailto:larafat@amideast.org)

#### Web

Webinar for Women in business  
For Kuwait, Lebanon, and Palestine  
July 19, 2009 - 15:30 Local Time  
RSVP at <http://www.womeninlaw.net/>

### Six Winners in Video Democracy Challenge

**DEMOCRACY**  
YOUR VOICE. YOUR VIDEO.



Six winners were selected in the Video Democracy Challenge competition. The winners from Brazil, Nepal, Philippines, Poland, the United Arab Emirates, and Zambia were chosen through online public voting on YouTube.

More than 900 people from 95 countries competed for the six prizes. From animated shorts to mini-documentaries, videos captured the meaning of democracy in today's world by incorporating thought-provoking creativity with thoughtful dialogue. The winners, hailing from various walks of life and different political regimes.

To learn more about this State Department-sponsored project, and to see winning videos and other films, please visit the [official website](#).

## MEPI in the Press and Publications

### Raghda Shaheen: Bridging Two Worlds – America and The Middle East

*University of Pennsylvania – June 23*  
<http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=2265>

### The Wharton School and the University of Pennsylvania Law School Host Young Women Leaders From the Middle East

*University of Pennsylvania – June 22*  
<http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/news.html?d=167678>

### Education Department Official to Lead U.S. Delegation to Jordan for Middle East, North Africa Community College Forum

*Media Newswire – June 18*  
[http://media-newswire.com/release\\_1092983.html](http://media-newswire.com/release_1092983.html)

### Omani teachers visit The Peninsula

*The Peninsula – June 16*  
[http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/Display\\_news.asp?section=Local\\_News&subsection=Qatar+News&month=June2009&file=Local\\_News200906174725.xml](http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/Display_news.asp?section=Local_News&subsection=Qatar+News&month=June2009&file=Local_News200906174725.xml)

### Businesswomen forum to host leadership meet

*Gulf Times – June 13*  
[http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu\\_no=2&item\\_no=296984&version=1&template\\_id=36&parent\\_id=16](http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=296984&version=1&template_id=36&parent_id=16)

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